

About the database

This database was composed as part of research for the Digital Arts and Humanities PhD. This data was transcribed from the '[Abstracts of Irish Exports and Imports](#)' in the National Library of Ireland. Some alterations to the original database were required to allow for browsing online on the website www.modernirishvenice.com. Other data used for this thesis is available from the author, but cannot be made publicly available due to rights restrictions.

The original, unaltered database, is where much of the data for the thesis was taken. This data was transcribed in imperial units, as it appears in the ledgers. This database contains 26,258 data points for the imports table, 19,488 in the exports table, 1,552 types of product in the goods table, and lists 121 countries or regions in the countries table. The goods table and the country table contain the primary keys to search the database. If you are using this database please find the list of country codes in the `unnormalised_country_list` file and the goods codes `Unnormalised goods list`.

The normalised database contains half the number of data points in both the exports and imports tables. This is due to the exclusion of a total column that contained the overall volumes of Irish trade. The reasons for this exclusion are detailed below, but this column has been replaced by a dynamically generated totals column on the website that calculates the overall volumes of Cork's trade in a product. For use online this database was altered to make it both user friendly to search and to standardise the measurement units, as much as possible. If this was not done it would have been very difficult to create dynamic visualisations based on user input.

Whereas the un-normalised database lists 1,522 types of goods as recorded in the ledgers, the normalised database has been rationalised to 641 types of goods. Many of the 1,522 goods listed in the un-normalised database were duplicates or variations of the same product, but with a different unit of measurement. In some years, if volumes of trade were low, a good may have been recorded in pounds rather than stones. This were standardised. In other years there were variations in how the hundredweight unit was recorded. This is especially apparent in the beef and butter trade. In some years the hundredweight was recorded as *CWT*, which divided as *hundredweight-stone-pounds*. However, in some instances this was recorded as *CQLB*, which breaks down as *hundredweight-quarters-pounds*. Both types of hundredweight were standardised to *CWT* to facilitate calculating totals. They were then decimalised to facilitate visualisations. For example, an entry of 1.4.7 *CWT*, which would be one hundredweight, four stone and seven pounds, becomes 1.5625 *CWT* in the database. Some other goods, such as wool and wood products, were simplified. There were 137 varieties of wood product recorded and this level of detail was excessive for the purposes of the online database, and in many instances only a single entry was recorded under a product. For wood staves alone there were 22 variations. This was simplified down to 12 types of wood product. A full list of the normalised goods is available in the `Goods Normalisation` file

The other major area where normalisation was undertaken was in the country and region table. The un-normalised database contains 121 listed regions. This was simplified down to 97. This normalisation was straightforward. An example of this type of normalisation would be Spain, which in the original database distinguished between whether Spanish regions were on the Mediterranean or not. This was also the case for France and Portugal. This were simplified to simply record the country as there was little trade between Cork and the Mediterranean regions. After 1819 there were four distinct entries for England, which had

seperate listings for goods that were subject to duty, free from duty or foreign and colonial produce. This was also normalised to England. This changes were undertaken to facilitate both the search and visualisation functionality. A breakdown of this process is available in the Countries Normalisation file.

This database also contains an additional column that was removed from the online version. This column, the 'totals' column, records the total volumes of a product traded by Ireland with a region for that year. However, this was only transcribed when Cork also undertook that trade in that year. This means that there is a very great potential to unintentionally misrepresent the volumes of Irish trade unless great care is taken. A more accurate overview of volumes of Irish trade is available in the Abstracts file. Due to this issue this column was excluded from the final database and replaced with a dynamically generated 'Total' column. This column is calculated by the database based on the users request and it returns the total volumes of Cork's trade in a good. This column is not available in the downloadable normalised database as it is recalculated on each query. Although it is possible to do similar calculations on the unnormalised database they are not accurate due to the variations in goods and measurements already mentioned.

[Available files](#)

There are two SQL files available. The file `normalised_sql.sql` contains all the data used for the database behind this website. If you are running HeidiSQL you can load the data from this file by launching HeidiSQL and navigating to the File-Load SQL File pane and selecting `normalised_sql.sql` from your download location. This database has had the units of measurements converted to a standard format and has some imperial measurements converted to metric where required. The number of goods was also rationalised. This was necessary to generate the charts on this site.

The second SQL file, `normalised_sql.sql`, is the raw, un-normalised database. This file contains the data as it was transcribed and is where the data from the thesis was predominantly derived. Unlike the normalised file the data here is represented in imperial units and the goods recorded have not been rationalised. Whereas the normalised database contains 641 individual items, this database contains 1,717.

Also available is the transcribed abstracts for total volumes of Irish trade organised by year and broken down by goods from 1797 to 1820. This excel file has not been normalised and the goods list is similar to that in the unnormalised SQL file. This is a very raw file that was mostly used for error checking, but is also useful for getting a broad view of Irish trade at this period. However, due to issues with some of the pages in the ledgers being either missing, stuck together, or of poor quality there are gaps in this data.